

Governor Markell, DSHA celebrate Tonic's Downtown Development Districts grant

Wilmington, DE – Highlighting ongoing efforts to revitalize Delaware's downtowns, Governor Jack Markell and Delaware State Housing Authority Director Anas Ben Addi presented a grant check on Monday to the owners of Tonic Bar and Grille, money that helped Tonic fund extensive renovations throughout the restaurant.

Tonic's grant rebate was funded by Delaware's Downtown Development Districts program, which provides state and local incentives to help offset the cost of making qualified investments in designated downtown districts.

"We know that a relatively small amount of state investment can help generate and support significant private investment in our downtown areas. Tonic is another great example," said Governor Markell. "We think this is a program that is going to pay dividends for a long time to come."

Tonic, formerly Deep Blue Bar and Grill, used the grant to help fund renovations throughout the restaurant and remain open. Upgrades included new wood floors, restoration of the bar top, and full kitchen renovations, including electrical improvements.

"I love my hometown and I'm thrilled to continue to be a part of the revitalization and the appeal of downtown Wilmington," said Dan Butler, owner of Tonic. "We were either going to reboot and invest, or we were going to close. Unequivocally, the project would not have gone forward without the investment from the Downtown Development Districts program."

The DDD program, administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority, was created by legislation proposed by Governor Markell and passed unanimously in May 2014 by the General Assembly.

Since the first projects were announced last April, about \$10 million in grant funding through the program has leveraged more than \$160 million in private investment in designated downtown districts in Wilmington, Dover and Seaford.

About \$800,000 remains set aside for small project grants, which are available for investors who spend more than \$15,000 but less than \$250,000 within a designated Downtown Development District.

Another \$4 million is available for large project grants in the 2016 Spring Funding Round, which closes on May 15. Residential, commercial, industrial and mixed-use projects may qualify for state and local incentives, including state grants worth up to 20 percent of qualified investments, up to \$1 million.

"This is what the Downtown Development Districts program is about – helping those in the private sector, big and small businesses, invest in our downtown areas," said Anas Ben Addi, Director of the Delaware State Housing Authority. "We love funding the large, transformative projects. But people should know that we're also ready to help small businesses, entrepreneurs, and homeowners in downtown areas."

Jeff Flynn, Director of Economic Development for the City of Wilmington, also attended and spoke at Monday morning's check presentation. Wilmington contributed jobs-related incentives to help keep Tonic open.

Building on the success of the Downtown Development Districts program, Governor Markell has recommended that lawmakers approve \$8.5 million in new DDD funding as part of his Fiscal Year 2017 budget. Delaware's Office of State Planning Coordination also is now accepting applications from new cities and towns hoping to designate Downtown Development Districts. Visit stateplanning.delaware.gov for more information.

#

Media contact:

Dan Shortridge
Director of Public Relations
Delaware State Housing Authority
Office: 302-739-0271
Cell: 302-632-0470
dans@destatehousing.com